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Perfect Pairing

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add one interior designer wife,
give them free rein to create
their own home, and you've got
a recipe for true design success





(previous pages) Richard Mullen's domain is the kitchen, and Barbara admits that it is command central. Beautiful as the space may be, both Mullens stress that it was built to be used. After the Mullens moved in and spent some time in their open kitchen, Barbara realized that everyone gathered there and that seating was lacking. She purchased a 10-foot-long sofa (covered in purple and white Jasper fabric) and installed it along the wall of windows facing the kitchen island. To make it even more functional, she added two square white tables that can be used for eating, homework or cocktail hour. (above, left) Calcutta Gold marble tops the counters, while espresso-stained white oak cabinets provide clean lines—all to highlight the Wolf range, Richard's must-have appliance. (above, right) A mixture of new and vintage furniture, the living room is a study in texture and color. "I mixed an orange chair with a black-and-white tweed couch, two chartreuse leather chairs, and a vintage rope-and-wood chair," the designer says. Pillows add more sparks of color as does the colorful print by artist Caio Fonseca.

BY SALLY STICH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY MINTON REDFIELD

When architect Richard Mullen and his interior designer wife Barbara, principles of Caroline-Edwards Interior Design in Aspen, decided to build a home on property they'd owned for five years, they discovered a level of personal and professional joy they'd not experienced before. "We love working with our clients," says Barbara, "but to do a project for ourselves was the best. We had a great time making decisions together, selecting pieces, fulfilling our wish lists."

Though the architecture of the house went through many permutations before its current incarnation, the

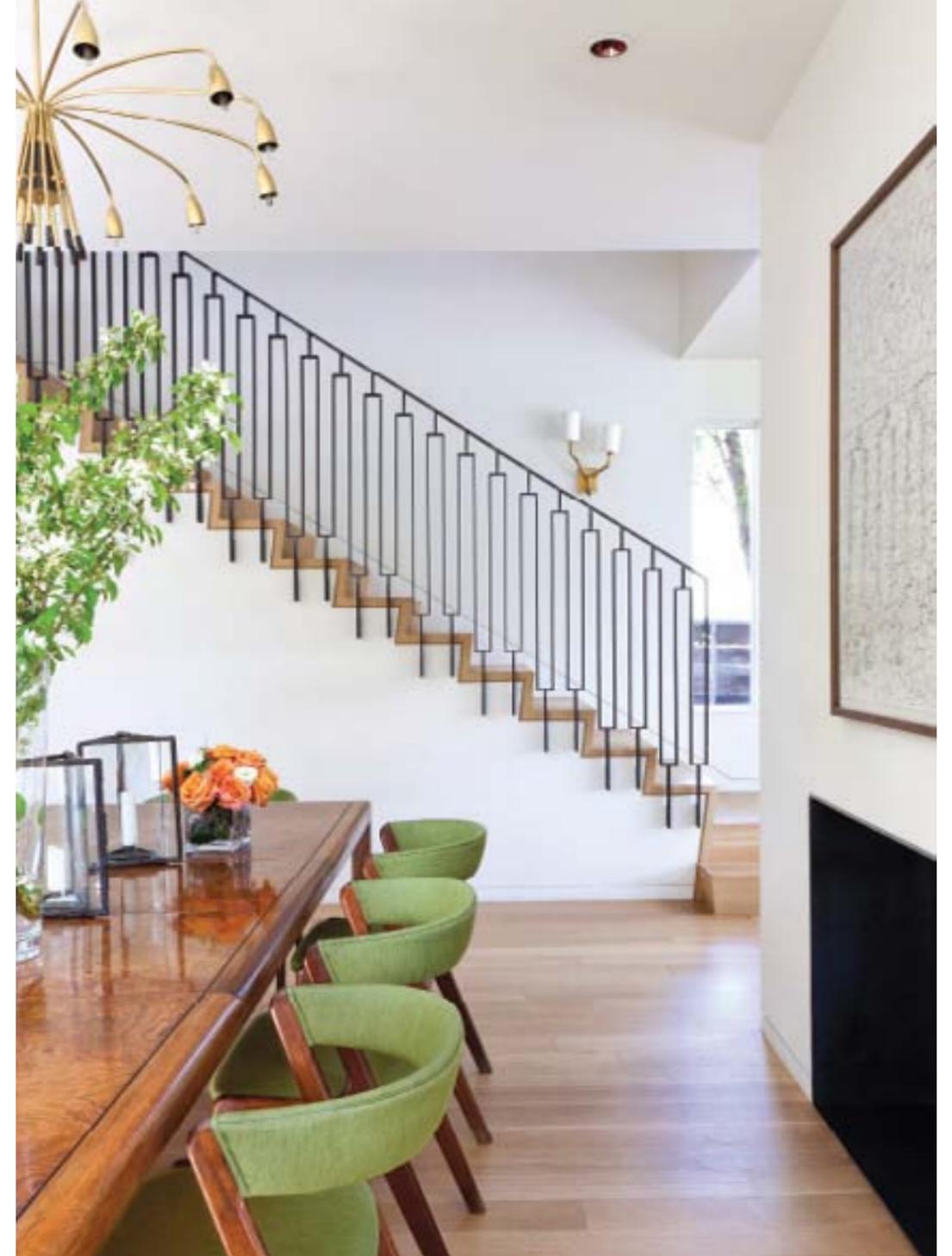


White walls predominate throughout the first floor, but the home is anything but colorless.

(opposite) The well-appointed dining room features Aspen artist Karl Wolfgang's photos and a 1940s vintage chandelier.

The burlwood table—a mid-century modern touch—belonged to Barbara's parents; the chairs were purchased on 1stDibs.com and reupholstered.

(right) The custom stair railing adds a decorative touch to the otherwise clean-lined space. The double-sided fireplace is adorned with a pen-and-ink drawing the couple found years ago in Santa Fe.



Mullens knew it was worth the process to arrive at just the right orientation for the narrow lot. "The home is two boxes—one is the garage, and the other is the living quarters, joined together by a mudroom," explains Barbara. The goal was to maximize the square footage because the family of three entertains often and wanted the main level to flow from living room to dining room, through to the kitchen and outdoors.

High on the must-have list was a great kitchen, where Richard is the chef. "I wanted to be able to prepare a meal while being part of the party," he says, adding that although the kitchen is a stunning example of clean lines and minimalism, it was designed to be used, not to be a showpiece. The counters are Calcutta Gold marble and show the patina of five years of daily use. "We are not perfectionists," explains Barbara. The star of this space is Richard's Wolf range. "Once you cook on one of these," he says, "you'll never want to cook on anything else."



(left) One of three bedrooms on the second floor, the master bedroom pairs crisp white linens with a Moroccan Suzani textile—one of Barbara’s all-time favorite acquisitions. “It’s the starting point of any room I put it in.” The art above the bed is a collage of pieces the Mullens have collected over the years.

(center) Just as the kitchen is Richard’s domain, so the master bath is Barbara’s. “I love to relax in there at the end of a long day,” she says. Calcutta gold marble is repeated here, along with vintage Asian-inspired hardware bought in Los Angeles. The art over the tub, bought at an Aspen antiques fair, hides the TV that Barbara watches while she soaks. (left) Eight-year-old George Mullen sleeps in a bedroom that carries through his mom’s love of blue and orange. A Jonathan Adler lamp adds the requisite touch of white and whimsy. (below) The house was designed as a series of boxes to make the most of the narrow lot. (One box is the garage; the other, the family’s living quarters.) Cedar siding and limestone blocks clad the exterior, allowing the house to fit naturally in its surroundings. Richard’s clever addition of overhanging eaves keeps the house from getting too hot while also allowing for unadorned windows.

One of Barbara’s great contributions—after living with the kitchen for a while—was to add a ten-foot sofa against a wall of windows that face the island. It makes for a great quiet corner or a gathering place for guests who want to sit and chat.

White walls predominate throughout the first floor, but the home is anything but colorless. Barbara loves mixing up bright colors, nowhere more obviously than in the living room, where orange, chartreuse, yellow, blue and green all play well together. “I can’t exactly say how I knew they all went together,” she says. “It was more trial and error.”

In lieu of elaborate architectural details, the Mullens opted for judiciously placed decorative touches. The stair railing near the dining room is one such example, as is the yellow trellis wallpaper in the guest bathroom. “We added these in places where they would surprise and delight,” says Barbara.

As projects go, this was a dream, created by a dream team of two who just happened to be their own dream clients. Or, as Barbara simply concludes, “We did it right. We got exactly what we wanted.” □

DESIGN DETAILS

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